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Volunteers can't keep up with fire code demands

By Tom Shevlin

The state's new fire code requirements have taken their toll on the town's fire inspectors, according to town officials.

Acting on the recommendations of Fire Chief James Bryer, Town Administrator Bruce Keiser

reported this week that the town would be adding a full time position to account for the increased work load the town has experienced since the state adopted its new code.

Jamestown, which maintains a volunteer fire department, has

been unable to meet the demand on a volunteer basis, according to Keiser.

In a letter sent to the Town Council, Keiser wrote that the town had been relying on volunteer help to satisfy fire code inspections. "While this approach has worked

in the past, it does not provide the reliability or accountability necessary to effectively manage this function," Keiser wrote.

Currently, the fire department has an allocated line item budget of \$5,800 for fire marshal-inspector duties. That position is filled by

retired Fire Chief Arthur Christman.

Bryer recommended the town hire a part-time fire inspector at a rate of \$20/hour for the remainder of the budgetary year, for a total of \$16,640.

See "Inspector" on page 13

Creating a vision of the island's future

By Michaela Kennedy

The recreation center is reserved tonight, Sept. 27, for the Jamestown Vision Workshop. Residents, town officials, business people and all interested in creating a solid path for the island's future are encouraged to attend the 7 p.m. town meeting.

"Please come," invites Town Planner Lisa Bryer. "We want a broad spectrum of people, so we can produce a vision by all residents." She notes the workshop is going to be interactive. "The goal of the evening is to further flush out issues for discussion solutions and come up with an initial list of ideas."

Russell Preston of Cornish Associates says the most important thing is for everyone island-wide to participate, not just those businesses or residents in the village area. "The more people we get to come and participate will let us know about what needs to be preserved," he adds.

Each member of the Jamestown Vision consultant team has had his own experience in helping communities, urban and rural. "We've used this process in Providence three times, a week-long charrette," Preston recalls.

The French-loan word "charrette," is used now in America as a collaborative public planning process, harnessing the talents and energies of all interested parties in order to create and support a buildable plan.

One concern, parking and how to make it better, is everyone's issue, Preston continues. Whether the community is Cape Cod or Providence, people want to park right in front of the store. If someone wants to expand their business, parking is a problem the way the ordinance is now written. Preston hints that a solution may lie in educating downtown visitors, since he found downtown parking in a two-block radius readily available. "We may not come up with the solution, but someone who may have been thinking about it may say something off the cuff that will be valuable," he suggests.

See "Vision" on page 13



Reclaiming the light

Carpenters from Abcore Construction began work on the Dutch Island Lighthouse in recent days. Money for the restoration is coming from more than \$150,000 raised by the Dutch Island Lighthouse Society, as well as federal funds.

Photo by Don Miller

Town Hall will open for business next week

By Dotti Farrington

A pre-opening tour of the new town hall on Monday showed a typical work-in-progress construction scene—with sawdust being vacuumed and signs of incompleteness. Dust aside, it is hard to miss the excitement of town workers and island residents welcoming the new facilities.

A pristine 10,400-square-foot complex of offices has been appended to the renovated old town hall, of nearly 2,400 square feet, to create a spacious town council meeting room for 100 people.

The new municipal center, with white exterior and green window sashes, was opened to the public for viewing last month, without concern about unpainted walls, hanging wires and assorted unfinished sections, as part of the town's celebration of the 350th anniversary of its purchase by colonists from the Narragansett Indians, whose relics continue to be unearthed on the island.

Since that time, the cupola, a memorial gift from contractors Richard and Ronald Pezzuco of Cranston, atop the old town hall section, has been completed. It is a replica of the cupola, the quadrilateral-shaped ornamental structure that once topped the old Town Hall. The original cupola was removed decades ago and relegated to eventual demise in that building's wet basement, which was used as the public works workshop when the town barn was next to the Narragansett municipal building.

The interior of the new complex has been painted, featuring brown tones for trim, as well as flooring, and peach, soft blue and gentle green and a bit of white on walls in various offices. Restrooms have attractive fabric wall coverings.

The new town hall will be opened next Thursday, Oct. 4, for town employees to serve residents in need of public records and municipal services in an environment promising to be the focus of much oohing and aahing, as well as promised unprecedented efficiency and ease of navigation, and especially secure record storage.

Town Hall visitors, whether just looking or actually seeking services, will enter through double glass doors whether they approach from the front Narragansett Avenue entrance, for which drivers will vie for limited on-street parking; or from the greatly expanded West Street parking area in the rear of the complex. The parking was extended from the rear of the town property onto the rear of the abutting St. Matthew's Church, as part of a cooperative neighborhood sharing arrangement.

The Narragansett way has been transformed from a three-step approach to the original 1883 town hall, to a gently sloping sidewalk, with a brick platform in front of the council chambers. A gold-topped flagpole, encircled by a stone wall is just the right height for sitting.

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